

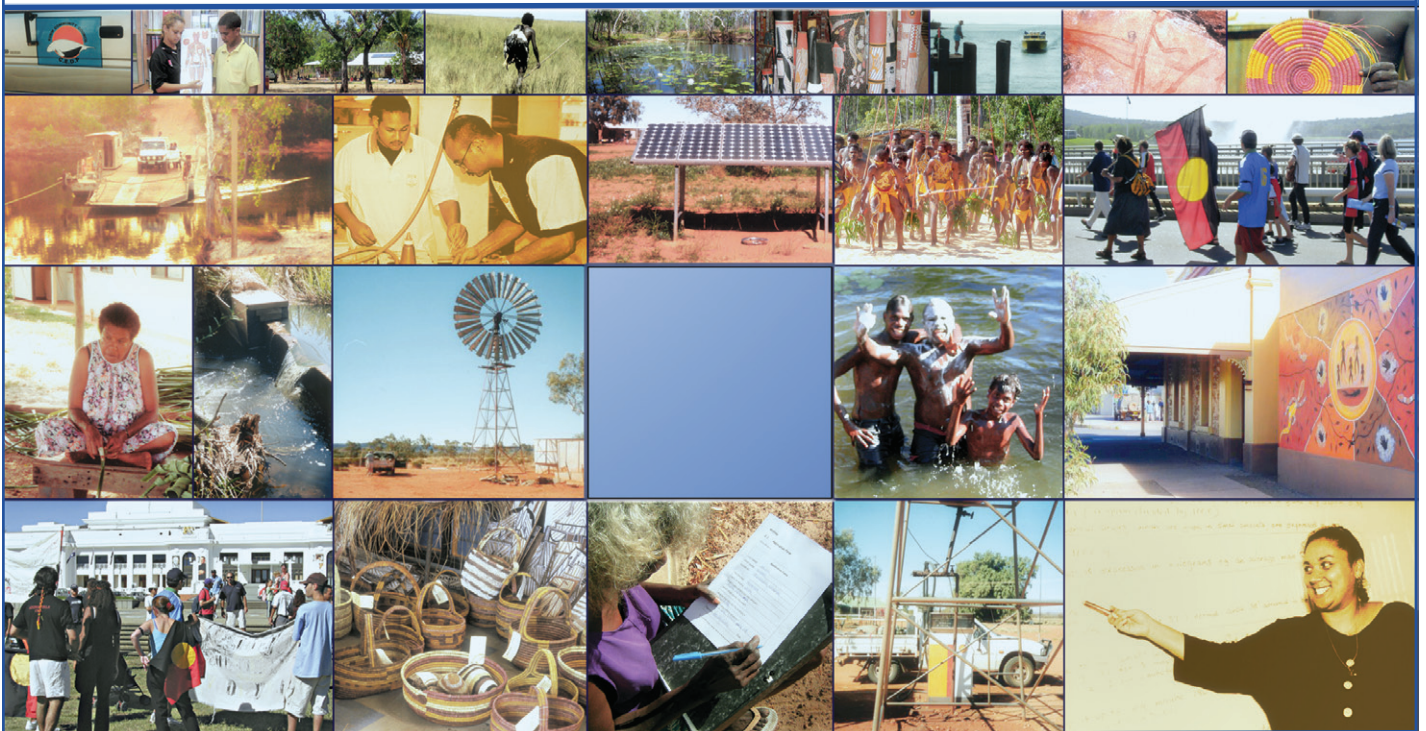
CENTRE FOR ABORIGINAL ECONOMIC  
POLICY RESEARCH



# Learning from Success: A Response to the Draft Indigenous Economic Development Strategy

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# Learning from success: A response to the Draft Indigenous Economic Development Strategy

A version of this Topical Issue was provided as a submission to the Australian Government's Indigenous Economic Development Strategy Draft for Consultation.

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

First, I welcome the government's focus on Indigenous Economic Development and the opportunity to give feedback on the [Indigenous Economic Development Strategy Draft for Consultation](#)<sup>1</sup> (henceforth the [Draft Strategy](#)).

My own background is in international and Indigenous development. For the last six years I have been researching issues relating to Indigenous governance, international NGOs and Indigenous development. Most recently I have been researching the socioeconomic benefits which flow from Indigenous participation in natural resource management (NRM) in New South Wales. My previous work in international development focused very much on working with the poorest and most marginalised in societies, including indigenous people internationally. I therefore feel I have considerable practical and research experience on which to base my comments on the Draft Strategy.

## 2. OVERALL COMMENTS

### 2.1. THE NATURE OF THE STRATEGY

The strategy document appears to be based very firmly in a modernisation approach to development, coupled to some degree with a human development approach. That is, it seeks to direct people to the modern private-sector economy, but recognises that education & training are essential to achieving entry. This approach to development is but one of an array of approaches possible, and internationally it is clear that a range of models may be appropriate for working with marginalised groups such as Indigenous peoples; these include livelihood approaches (Davies et al. 2008), and asset-based community development approaches (Mathie & Cunningham 2003). It is also important to note that Australia has supported the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples and those rights should underpin the Strategy. In international development this is known as a rights-based approach to development; such a philosophy should underpin the economic development strategy domestically.

The Draft Strategy assumes that economic development occurs through the private sector. I would argue that this is a very narrow approach to an economy; OECD economies comprise public, private and non-profit sectors and all three will make a contribution to Indigenous economic development. Indeed, a recent Productivity Commission

1. Available at <[http://resources.fahcsia.gov.au/IEDS/ieds\\_default.htm](http://resources.fahcsia.gov.au/IEDS/ieds_default.htm)>.

report noted that the non-profit sector in Australia compares well, in terms of measured contribution to national income, with the wholesale trade sector, transport and storage, or government administration and defence and is considerably larger than the communications sector. It accounts for 8.5% of total Australian employment and is growing fast (Productivity Commission 2010: 63–64).<sup>2</sup> There is no recognition of this in the strategy. In the regional and remote parts of Australia, Indigenous people also engage in a customary economy—that is a form of subsistence economy through hunting, gathering, fishing etc. This activity is often a significant contributor to local economies and diets and may be the basis for market engagement (see Altman 2007, 2010; Altman, Buchanan & Larsen 2007). Neglect of this fourth sector of the economy misses an important characteristic of remote areas.

The strategy is also very individualistic and relies on a human capital theory approach—that is, that economic development occurs when individual capacities are developed. Whilst individuals obviously can make economic progress, there is very strong evidence that more sustainable and inclusive gains are made when Indigenous communities collectively develop an approach to development, and work together to improve economic outcomes. This requires that they first develop legitimate and effective governance which provides the foundation for their economic development. Australian and international experience suggests that this institution-building and capacity-building for governance is essential if economic development initiatives are to succeed (Cornell & Kalt 2006).

A most significant gap in the Strategy is any review of what has worked in the past on which to build a future plan. Research that colleagues and I have conducted in recent years (Hunt et al. 2008; Hunt & Smith 2006, 2007) and evidence from the Indigenous Governance Awards (IGA) (Reconciliation Australia 2006, 2007, 2009) provides evidence about what does work, and it would seem to me to be prudent to be cognisant of that before planning for the future. A scan of past reviews and program evaluations would also reveal valuable lessons I am sure, and the Closing the Gap Clearinghouse could no doubt assist.

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#### IGA:

Indigenous  
Governance  
Awards

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#### NSW:

New South Wales

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### 2.2. MY FOCUS ON NEW SOUTH WALES (NSW)

Although the Draft Strategy itself does not suggest this, most 'economic development' focus in Indigenous policy has been on remote Australia. This submission draws attention to the situation of Indigenous people in NSW, the state with the largest number of Indigenous people and the largest overall population; it is also the state which has borne the impact of colonisation the longest. As this submission will demonstrate, a developmental approach is highly relevant in this context as well as in remote Australia. My research in NSW indicates that success arises from both endogenous factors such as Indigenous governance and leadership, and opportunity provided through availability of infrastructure, services and programs of support (e.g. appropriately provided educational services), as well as assets to build on, rights to leverage from, and a community-based development approach.

### 2.3. THE IMPORTANCE OF GOVERNANCE AND HOLISTIC DEVELOPMENT

Those communities that are making progress with economic development across Australia have developed strong, culturally legitimate, and effective governance. They have collectively developed a vision about what they want to achieve, and then have developed locally-relevant strategies and programs to achieve it. They have built their economic development on firm foundations: strong, culturally legitimate relationships, clear decision-making authority and processes, well-thought out policies and procedures, good leadership, and often partnerships with other organisations that can bring specific expertise, capital

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2. As one example of the opportunities for Indigenous employment in the non-profit sector, approximately one-third of Centacare Wilcannia-Forbes staff is Indigenous.

investment or good business advice. Importantly, they are all underpinned by Indigenous culture and build on it to achieve their success. Examples include Yarnteen Aboriginal Corporation in Newcastle, Thamurrurr Regional Development Corporation in Wadeye, Carbon Media Events, Brisbane, Muru Mittigar (Penrith), Noongar Mia Mia (a housing company) in Perth, Laynhapuy Homelands Association in Yirrkala, and Traditional Credit Union in the Northern Territory. These organisations are all providing economic development opportunities appropriate to their localities, creating and sustaining a significant number of Indigenous jobs.<sup>3</sup>

In all these cases one can see Indigenous individuals gaining economic development opportunities because the community (or a subgroup of people in a community) have made a decision to collaborate to build opportunities for their people, to put in place the necessary governance processes, to gain clarity about their collective aspirations and vision and to work together towards it over a significant period of time. Where they have put in place strong, legitimate governance, which has the support of the relevant community base, they are able to function well and make steady progress towards their development goals.

It is also important to recognise that experience and research indicates that economic development in Indigenous communities cannot be divorced from social and cultural development; a holistic approach is generally required. There is only limited evidence of this being recognised in the Strategy paper. Yet it is absolutely central to success. My recent work in NSW examining socioeconomic benefits of Aboriginal participation in natural resource management has highlighted this fact again. I quote from a paper about two very successful NRM-businesses, Banbai Business Enterprises, Guyra, and Nyambaga Green Team, based at Ngurrula Aboriginal Corporation, Nambucca:

At both locations the need for considerable holistic support for long term unemployed Aboriginal people and youth entering or re-entering the workforce was emphasised. Managers and team leaders have to be highly supportive in helping Aboriginal workers develop a work ethic, gain confidence, manage or resolve other problems in their lives, and generally settle into the organisation with its rules and culture. Clear boundaries and expectations are set by both organisations, but a great deal of support is offered to those workers, from often complex family circumstances, who are genuinely trying to meet them. This takes time and specific skills, which need to be recognised (Hunt 2010).

This means that economic development has to occur within a framework of social and cultural development if it is to succeed, especially where young or long-term unemployed people are concerned. It requires extra time and resources as well as highly skilled people to achieve success working with such groups.

The same point about the 'intensive personal case management which underwrites the continuing viability of work projects' was noted in an earlier study of the Redfern Community Development Employment Projects (CDEP). Smith noted that 'The extent of the economic, health, educational and other difficulties confronted by participants are not underestimated by the Redfern Aboriginal Corporation, but they may well be underestimated by external funding bodies' (Smith 1995: 15).

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**CDEP:**  
Community  
Development  
Employment  
Projects

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3. More details about these organisations can be found in publications from the Indigenous Community Governance project: <<http://caepr.anu.edu.au/governance/index.php>> and from IGA publications and the IGA website of Reconciliation Australia: <<http://www.reconciliation.org.au/igawards/pages/winners.php>>.

### 3. WHAT CAN WE LEARN FROM INTERNATIONAL EXPERIENCE?

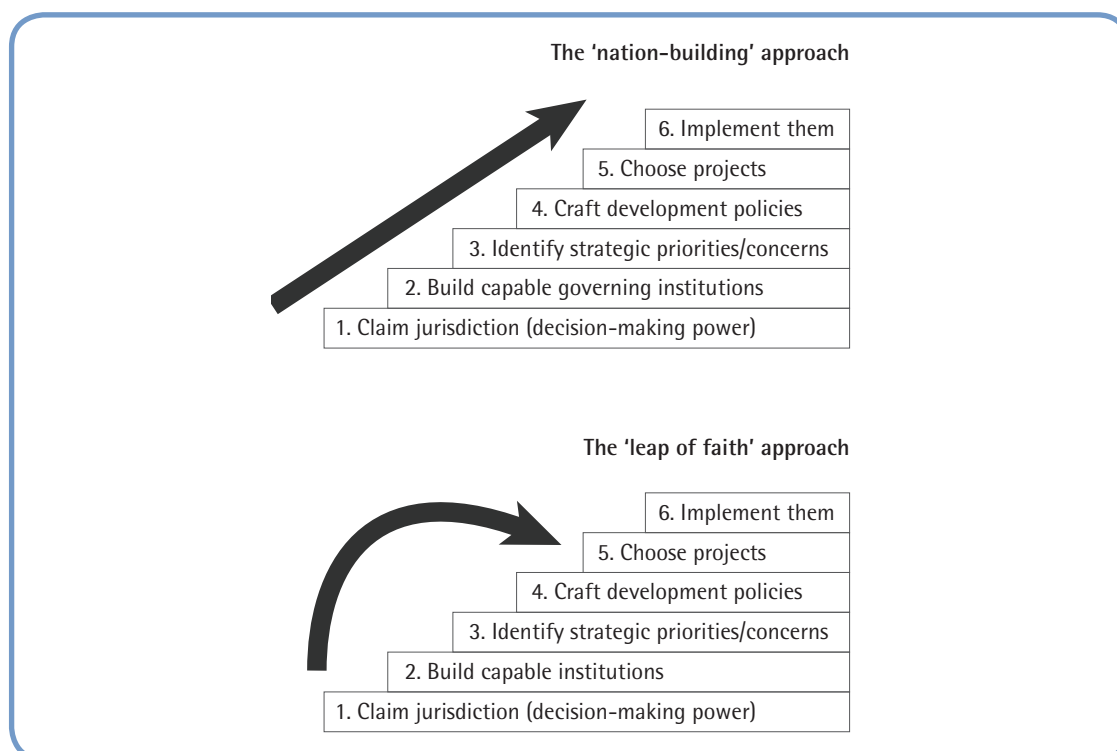
In Australia we seem to take little account of the lessons from overseas—whether from other settler majority societies such as New Zealand, USA or Canada, or from developing and transitional countries with Indigenous populations.

If we look overseas we see some important features of successful Indigenous economic development strategies:

- Maori development has had a strong rights-base to it, particularly in terms of marine rights and the development of the very significant Maori fishing industry (Durette 2007);
- In the USA & Canada researchers have identified that the 'nation-building' approach is far more successful with Indigenous tribal groups than the orthodox jobs approach to economic development (Cornell & Kalt 2006, Taylor 2008); the diagram below illustrates the difference between the 'nation-building' approach (that works) and the orthodox approach (or leap of faith) approach to Indigenous economic development as identified in North America and also evident in Australia.
- Internationally, World Bank and UNDP research among the world's marginalised people indicates that market-based solutions are insufficient; rather, community-driven development, based on identification and building on local assets is an important approach with marginalised groups. Recent research also suggests that to overcome poverty, the blockages which impede marginalised communities realising their goals should be an important focus (Binswanger-Mkhize, de Regt & Spector 2009; Narayan, Pritchett & Kapoor 2009).

**UNDP:**  
United Nations  
Development  
Programme

**Fig. 1. The difference between the 'nation-building' and the 'leap of faith' approaches to Indigenous economic development**



Source: Cornell & Jorgensen 2007: 12.



## 4. THE MISSING INGREDIENT: GOVERNANCE AS A KEY FOUNDATION FOR DEVELOPMENT

Whilst a great deal of emphasis is often placed on corporate governance of Aboriginal businesses, the governance issues I want to highlight are far broader than this, and relate to Aboriginal community relationships. Aboriginal 'communities' are complex social contexts with a mix of traditional custodians, historical people, and more recent residents and the first principle for getting legitimate governance is to sort out relationships and be clear how these complexities should be reflected in governance arrangements. Where this has been done successfully, where relationships are understood and 'right' from a cultural perspective, and where mandates are clear, Indigenous people can drive their own development. Often, the governance of successful economic development organisations reflects several large families or multi-clan-based arrangements, as such units reflect the continuing social structures of Aboriginal society and have real legitimacy with the constituency they are intended to serve (Hunt & Smith 2006, 2007). By Indigenous driven-development I mean development which reflects the aspirations of a particular group and which is led by them. It does not mean that they can 'develop' without external support—an enabling role for the state or other players is essential; but it does mean that the external support should be there to help them achieve their goals, not to impose some goals derived externally upon them. The latter approach will not be sustainable as they will not 'own' the development and work to sustain it.

## 5. EVIDENCE FROM NSW ABOUT WHAT WORKS

I now want to focus on some of the case studies from NSW which are highlighted in two papers I have prepared, one with other colleagues at the Centre for Aboriginal Economic Policy Research (CAEPR) (Hunt 2010; Hunt, Altman & May 2009). These highlight various issues:

- the role Indigenous rights can play in underpinning economic development
- the motivation of Indigenous people to fulfil cultural responsibilities by looking after country
- the need for strong community governance and leadership
- the importance of building on the social and cultural needs of the community
- the importance of a holistic approach
- the value of specially tailored & on-the-job training
- the need to engage with non-Indigenous people and organisations

### 5.1 BANBAI BUSINESS ENTERPRISES, GUYRA

*This example illustrates asset-based community development, based on rights to land achieved through a land purchase, public sector support through the declaration of an Indigenous Protected Area (IPA), and the flow-on economic and social benefits achieved through sound Indigenous governance and leadership, coupled with availability of suitable training.*

Banbai Business Enterprises manages Wattleridge IPA. Wattleridge is a botanically diverse bushland with high biodiversity values on outcropping granite country on the Northern Tablelands. It has evidence of long Aboriginal occupation, including axe grinding groove sites, art sites and scarred trees. The land was bought by the Indigenous Land Corporation in 1998 to enable Banbai people to return to a part of their land and reclaim their cultural heritage. Three years after this purchase the land was declared an IPA, and in February 2008 the Indigenous Land Corporation divested ownership to Banbai Land Enterprises.

#### CAEPR:

Centre for  
Aboriginal  
Economic Policy  
Research

#### IPA:

Indigenous  
Protected Area

The IPA is managed by the traditional owners, who are undertaking major pest management and fire management strategies and managing the cultural heritage sites on it. The community is also developing a native plant propagation nursery, training people in horticulture, and establishing seed banks and restoring degraded land through revegetation.

The owners are aiming to make the property financially viable, and are developing small businesses to help promote employment and generate additional funds for conservation. They are upgrading cabins, building walking tracks, viewing platforms, and developing interpretation signage to foster eco-tourism. They plan for this tourism venture to grow and provide income, employment and further infrastructure development. Tourists are currently mainly from the local area, for example youth groups, family groups, bushwalking club, and a women's group.

A total of 19 people are employed on IPA activities and Banbai Business Enterprises is now the second largest private sector employer in the small town. Over ten years a total of 47 people have been employed by Banbai Business enterprises (some with CDEP support). Interestingly of 27 former CDEP participants Banbai engaged over the years until CDEP's abolition, fourteen have gone on to training or employment (and an additional five are not currently in the workforce due to age or parenting responsibilities; only six remain unemployed and the whereabouts of two are unknown). The IPA has stimulated a considerable amount of training—community members have undertaken Certificate courses in building and construction, Bobcat and excavator operation, front end loader and backhoe operation, recreational fisheries, governance, information technology, minute taking, etc. The training has led a number of people to further employment opportunities. Some nine of the people trained have gone on to non-IPA related employment and one, who would never have previously dreamed of it, has gone on to university study.

These developments have transformed the Aboriginal community of 300 people. Beforehand, only three people had a car and a driver's licence (a major limiting factor for employment opportunities); now several more have licenses and cars due in part to the IPA collaborating with the Job Agency to provide licence training and support to obtain birth certificates (necessary for the paperwork to obtain their licences) for nine people. Drug and alcohol use has declined, particularly during the week when people are working. The high crime rate has dropped, and there are instances of improved health, and pride in the achievements of the group.

The key reported factors in the success of this initiative have been getting the land back and having the funds to develop it and pay people to work in the land, although sound Aboriginal leadership is also a key success factor.

The benefits emerging from this IPA are being recognised locally and the Guyra LALC, which has had no funding to manage its land, has now invited Banbai Business Enterprises, to manage its unoccupied land, which has also now been declared an IPA, Tarriwa Kurrurukun.

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Source: Own fieldwork and see Hunt 2010.

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## 5.2 NYAMBAGA GREEN TEAM AT NGURRALA ABORIGINAL CORPORATION

*This example illustrates the value of an asset-based approach, the importance of connections with non-Indigenous organisations and the governance and management provided by a non-Indigenous Manager and the Ngurralla Aboriginal Corporation, as well as the importance of good training support.*

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**TAFE:**  
Technical and  
Further Education

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The Nyambaga Green Team was set up to provide employment in natural resource management for Aboriginal people. It is conducting a range of environmental improvements in the Northern Rivers catchment area, including weed removal, development of low-environment impact infrastructure, such as walkways etc, revegetation work, restoring the river and estuary environment and developing a cycleway.

The model developed initially drew on support from CDEP and some funding from the Northern Rivers Catchment Management Authority (CMA) to support coordination, along with considerable logistic and other business support from Ngurralla Aboriginal Corporation and training provided by the local TAFE. From this base, the Green Team was able to bid for a range of tenders and contracts relating to environmental work to provide full-time work for its trainees. This work came from the Shire, the National Parks and Wildlife Service and a range of other bodies, including the Local Aboriginal Land Council. Over the seven years of its existence the Nyambaga Green Team has completed a total of over 200 commercial contracts. Thus, this is a 'payment for environmental services' model.

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**CMA:**  
Catchment  
Management  
Authority

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To date 33 people have had the opportunity to participate in Nyambaga Green Team activity. Of these, 11 are still involved, four as the core Green Team and seven in the current trainee group. Of the remaining 22, 11 have gone on to other work (including one apprenticeship), three are involved in family childcare and not available for full-time work, and separate non-work-related tragedies left one badly disabled and another sadly died. The current situation of only six is either unknown or they are currently unemployed. Three of those in work are active in an Aboriginal family-owned mowing and gardening business. Thus most of those still available for work have gained or created work following their participation in the Green Team.

Associated with the employment has been the training and qualifications that everyone participating has gained. Since there are few Aboriginal people in the Nambucca Region with tertiary qualifications, this is itself a very positive development. The Green Team has enabled 28 Aboriginal people to gain such qualifications to date and more are in process. For those who stayed and are now the core of the Green Team, there have been particularly significant achievements. Two are completing Cert IV Conservation and Land Management and two have already completed Diplomas (another with a Diploma got a job with the Nambucca Shire), with four now undertaking a Cert IV in Training and Assessment as well. Flexible, relevant, on the job training has been the key to success in this regard.

The team has won a number of awards, and it is clear that the work they are doing makes them proud, restores their dignity and self-respect, and encourages a work ethic. It builds on their strong motivation for this type of work and the family and kin networks in the community. They enjoy working in an all-Aboriginal team, with their extended network of relatives. At the same time the team has to manage the harsh social realities of Indigenous life, and flexibility and support for team members facing personal or family difficulties is essential to success.

The contacts and networks developed by the non-Indigenous Manager have been important in gaining contracts, and his business skills have been important in sustaining the enterprise.

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Source: Own fieldwork and see Hunt 2010.

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**WBACC:**

Wreck Bay  
Aboriginal  
Community  
Council

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### 5.3 WRECK BAY ENTERPRISES LIMITED<sup>4</sup>

*This example shows how an Natural Resource Management opportunity (in this case joint management of a National Park) can lead to further enterprise development and significant job opportunities for Indigenous people.*

In 1995 title to what was then called Jervis Bay National Park was transferred to the Wreck Bay Aboriginal Community Council (WBACC) under a 99-year lease back arrangement to National Parks. In 1996 a joint management board was established for the Park and in 1998 the name was changed to Booderee National Park. In 2007 there were 18 WBACC members employed by Parks Australia to work in the park (of a total of 38 Park staff). At the same time, WBACC 's Wreck Bay Enterprises Limited, a wholly owned private company, undertakes contract work for the Park. It employs 35 people who undertake a range of services such as:

- operating the park entry station and collecting entry fees
- cleaning Park buildings, visitors centre and camp grounds
- road and track maintenance
- grounds maintenance at the Booderee Botanic Gardens.

Wreck Bay Enterprises Limited also has contracts for grounds maintenance work for the Naval Air Base and the Jervis Bay Primary School. Although some employment with the Park preceded the Joint Management arrangements, it is clear that these arrangements have broadened the opportunities for economic development in this small Aboriginal community, creating considerable employment there.

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Source: Smyth 2007.

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### 5.4 ARAKWAL NATIONAL PARK & THE BUNDJALUNG OF BYRON BAY

*Among other things, this case study highlights the important role rights (in this case native title rights) can play in providing the basis for Indigenous economic development. Strong Indigenous leadership and governance, and holistic approaches which combine cultural/social and economic development are also features of this example.*

Three Arakwal Indigenous Land Use Agreements arising from Native Title claims lodged by Bundjalung (Arakwal) people, were negotiated between 2001 and 2008 to create a new co-managed Arakwal National Park, a separately declared Aboriginal Area, and a grant of additional land for housing, the construction of a cultural centre and tourist facility and freehold title over the Broken Head Caravan Park which the Bundjalung people are using to stimulate economic development. This land is of high cultural and historical significance to the people.

Prior to these agreements the Bundjalung people of Byron Bay had developed a Memorandum of Understanding with the Byron Shire in relation to land and heritage management, particularly in relation to development applications and land zoning, and had also developed a co-management agreement relating to the Cape Byron Lighthouse reserve. The Bundjalung people have also been active with Cape Byron Marine Park, developing a Memorandum of Understanding with the Park which includes an informal advisory committee, development of cultural use and wild resource use agreements, training, employment of two people, and preferential tendering provisions.

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4. Wreck Bay is Commonwealth territory on the NSW south coast.

From their perspective, the most significant benefits of these agreements and arrangements are the ability people now have to reconnect with their country, and the considerable opportunities for employment which are emerging. They now have three qualified National Park rangers, and a fully qualified Marine Park ranger (the first, and still the only Aboriginal Marine Park ranger in NSW), as well as several other employees involved in cultural and natural resource management (CNRM), retail and administration, and these achievements are inspiring others. They also have an all-Aboriginal commercial diving team, and their contract ranger team undertakes a range of work such as fencing, cultural heritage management, necropsies (autopsies on marine life), mooring maintenance, whale disentanglement from netting etc.

The community reportedly feels that after a long struggle towards its vision, it has regained a significant proportion of its land and that it now can move to a phase of developing further the economic benefits which can be leveraged from it, particularly in its location as a popular tourism centre, and can develop housing, educational activities and foster intergenerational learning about the country. Training opportunities the NRM initiatives have offered may only lead to short-term job opportunities in NRM, but are sometimes enabling people to gain other work outside conservation agencies. Importantly, the work caring for country is seen by Bunjalung people as not just a job. It's their own country they are looking after.

They emphasise the importance of developing relationships with non-Indigenous institutions and individuals as through those relationships opportunities develop.

It should be noted that in this case, intra-Aboriginal conflict has emerged as a result of other people with apparent claims to Native Title rights being marginalised from these developments. Nevertheless, the key point that rights generate economic development remains, even though there may be conflict about whose rights and who has gained from them.

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Sources: Agreements, Treaties and Negotiated Settlements 2001; National Native Title Tribunal 2001; interviews, CEO Bunjalung Byron Bay (Arakwal) Aboriginal Corporation & Operations Manager, Aquatic, Marine Parks Authority NSW; notes from presentation by Yvonne and Wally Stewart at Native Title Conference, Canberra 2010 and Healthy Parks, Healthy People Congress, Melbourne 2010.

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## 5.5. SOME ISSUES ARISING

What these examples illustrate is that economic development succeeds when we build on the rights, cultural assets and social networks of Indigenous people (both 'bridging and bonding 'capital) and do not ignore those or see them as a problem to be overcome. These examples enable whole groups of Indigenous people to make social and economic progress in relation to the kinds of development with which they are comfortable and in work which meets their aspirations.

Interestingly some of the organisations mentioned above developed their initiatives with the support of the CDEP program which has now ended in NSW. Whilst the ending of CDEP may have forced some Indigenous groups to focus more on winning contracting opportunities<sup>5</sup>, the developmental role of CDEP is now absent, and may thus limit the emergence of more Indigenous groups with the capacity to take on contract work, unless alternative arrangements are put in place.

Furthermore, funds for traineeships in Conservation and Land Management (in NSW at least) only support trainees up to Cert III level, which is inadequate for developing future supervisors and team leaders in natural resource management. Unless alternative sources of funding are found (which appears to be difficult), this is one constraint on Indigenous people having the qualifications necessary to take on more senior roles, which would in turn enable younger, or more inexperienced people to join Indigenous NRM businesses or teams. Currently these senior roles are often still undertaken by non-Indigenous people.

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5. For example the Yarkuwa Indigenous Knowledge Centre Aboriginal Corporation is now more focused on winning contracts (personal communication from the Manager, November 2010).

## 6. EXTENDING OPPORTUNITIES FOR INDIGENOUS LAND AND SEA COUNTRY MANAGEMENT AS AN ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY

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In an earlier report (Hunt, Altman & May 2009) we made a number of recommendations as to how the kinds of benefits articulated in the case studies above could be extended in NSW. No doubt similar recommendations could be made for other south eastern states. Some of the most relevant are listed (or adapted) below. While these recommendations were directed to the NSW State government, the Commonwealth could provide policy incentives and programmatic support to encourage a state such as NSW (or other south-east Australian states) to adopt similar approaches, where these are relevant.

### 6.1. EXTEND THE INDIGENOUS ESTATE IN NSW

Opportunities for Aboriginal engagement in NRM and for generating social benefits will be greater where opportunities can be taken to extend the Indigenous estate by expediting land claims, proactively facilitating national park handbacks, supporting IPAs, and transferring travelling stock reserves and other appropriate Crown land, such as certain State forests, to Aboriginal ownership.

### 6.2. EXTEND JOINT MANAGEMENT TO ALL PROTECTED AREAS

Whilst NSW has made some steps in this direction, it could set a goal of negotiating agreements with the appropriate Aboriginal traditional owners for the management of a significant proportion of its protected areas (land and marine) by 2013, the date of the next World Parks Congress, and the remaining areas by 2015.

### 6.3. ENSURE EQUITABLE FUNDING FOR MANAGEMENT OF THE INDIGENOUS CONSERVATION ESTATE COMPARED TO NON-INDIGENOUS PROTECTED AREAS

The national IPA program, which has expanded significantly across northern Australia in particular, and appears set to expand considerably in NSW, is providing a range of environmental services such as biodiversity protection, weed control, fire management, and wetlands recovery, for the nation. Funding has not kept pace with the interest in and growth of the IPA program, and the loss of CDEP funds exacerbates this situation. Whilst the Federal government has introduced the Working on Country program, to fund new positions across the nation, there will be a need to expand such employment opportunities and better finance the IPA program, so that existing and new IPAs are adequately and equitably resourced in comparison to other protected areas.

### 6.4. EXTEND ABORIGINAL NRM ON PRIVATELY-HELD LAND IN NSW THROUGH ENHANCING THE EFFORTS OF CMAS

Much of NSW is already held in freehold title or as perpetual leases. To extend the arena for Aboriginal NRM, opportunities for Aboriginal people to access their country, contribute to conservation and cultural heritage management and facilitate intergenerational knowledge transfer can be facilitated through enhancing the capacity of Catchment Management Authorities to provide opportunities for Aboriginal participation, by learning from the experiences of the most successful CMAs.

#### **6.5. RECOGNISE INDIGENOUS PROPERTY RIGHTS IN EXISTING AND EMERGING NATURAL RESOURCE MARKETS**

Protracted disputes about Indigenous access to natural resources (such as occurs in relation to fisheries) could be avoided by greater legal recognition of Indigenous interests in new forms of property rights in emerging markets such as fresh water, carbon, and biodiversity. Whilst NSW has gone some way to recognise water rights (though not in terms of allocations of cultural flows in the Murray Darling Basin, for example), in other areas there remains a lack of clarity about property rights or the place of Indigenous interests in market-based mechanisms. Legislative action could clarify rights and provide the basis for new CNRM opportunities.

#### **6.6. DEVELOP A WHOLE-OF-GOVERNMENT POLICY AND APPROACH TO SUPPORT INDIGENOUS DEVELOPMENT THROUGH CNRM**

An overarching statewide strategy for Aboriginal development through CNRM is necessary. Such a strategy would need to recognise the diversity of Aboriginal circumstances and aspirations across the State and embrace business development and employment as well as sustainable livelihoods approaches.

#### **6.7. DEVELOP A CNRM-BASED ABORIGINAL EMPLOYMENT AND BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY**

CNRM appears to be generating a significant number of jobs and business opportunities for Aboriginal people in NSW. More could be achieved if employment and business development initiatives were specifically focused into a strategy around CNRM, so as to leverage more development opportunities from existing activity. Aboriginal organisations, local governments and private sector stakeholders should be involved in developing and implementing such a strategy. An education and career development strategy for Indigenous land and sea managers should be included. The Many Rivers Regional Partnership Agreement should be monitored closely as a potential model to extend to other regions.

#### **6.8. ADOPT A LIVELIHOODS STRATEGY FOR DEVELOPMENT THROUGH SUSTAINABLE USE OF NATURAL RESOURCES**

Various opportunities exist for Aboriginal livelihoods to be developed based on sustainable use of natural resources. These may include wildlife and wild foods harvesting for a range of subsistence or sale purposes, or cultivation of native species for commercial development. There is no government policy or economic support which could facilitate and support such development across NSW. Planning and impact assessment processes need to take these uses into account.

#### **6.9. RECOGNISE CUSTOMARY MARINE TENURE AND ASPIRATIONS TO MANAGE COASTAL COUNTRY**

NSW Aboriginal people want a primary role in the management of coastal and marine resources—both in the commercial fishing industry and in co-management of the coastal and marine zone. There is a need for more robust implementation of the Indigenous Fisheries Strategy, for follow-up to the 2003 workshop with commercial Indigenous fishers, and for a consistent policy across Fisheries and Marine Parks to support sustainable customary use of marine resources. The Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority concept of Traditional Use of Marine Resources Management Agreements could be explored more fully in NSW.

## 7. INDIGENOUS ORGANISATIONS, TRAINING AND CAPACITY DEVELOPMENT

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Evidence from the Indigenous Governance Awards as well as from a number of the case studies above indicates that Indigenous organisations succeed in developing their staff due to the considerable investment they make in staff training and capacity development. It was noticeable that a number of previously employed staff who now worked at Banbai BE observed that only at Banbai BE had they had the opportunity for training, accreditation and development. Other employers had not given them these opportunities. The successful Indigenous training models appear to be those which are very much on-the-job or highly job-relevant. Thus training for people in the absence of a job may not be a particularly successful strategy.

However, evidence from the Indigenous Governance Awards nominees shows that many Aboriginal organisations have demonstrated that they can take people in at entry level with no or very limited qualifications and are able to give them the training, experience and good supervision which enables them to reach very senior positions in their organisations, often gaining formal qualifications along the way. The point I wish to make here is that giving people the job is often the starting point, rather than getting them endlessly trained for non-existent job opportunities. The latter is all too common in the context of Indigenous Australia and can be counterproductive, debilitating and depressing for the over-trained but under-employed person. Thus whilst availability of suitable training is necessary, training divorced from work opportunities and other support may be ineffective.

An expansion of the Aboriginal community-controlled sector, appropriately funded to allow for training, mentoring and development such as in health and other areas, would contribute to the skilling up of Aboriginal people and their increased confidence to work in the 'mainstream'. It is through such organisations that Aboriginal training and skill development occurs very successfully.

## 8. CONCLUSION

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In this submission I have tried to draw on a range of experiences of successful Indigenous development to draw out lessons and requirements: international experience of Indigenous development; experience from research on governance and involvement with Reconciliation Australia's Indigenous Governance Awards since their inception; and experience from current research on Aboriginal engagement in natural resource management in NSW.

All these experiences suggest that the individualistic and 'mainstream' approach to a narrow conception of Indigenous economic development should be reconsidered in light of evidence from what is actually working on the ground in Indigenous communities. A more holistic community-development focus building on Indigenous rights and assets, with plenty of the right sort of capacity development support in governance and in the substantive area of development undertaken, could be very successful. This requires governments to take an 'arms-length' enabling type of role, removing blockages to development and facilitating support, including through a social enterprise program of some sort which could play that facilitative capacity development function.

A particular emphasis on employment and enterprise development in CNRM should be one significant strand of the strategy as it is working well across Australia and there remain many opportunities to broaden and deepen the benefits already obtained.

The non-profit and Indigenous community controlled sectors are also important locations for developing Indigenous people's economic opportunities and should not be neglected in the strategy.



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